

Apocalypse 92

Chapter 92 Moving Forward

"Is everyone ready?" Tristan asked from the front, his hand resting on the doorknob without turning it just yet. He glanced back at the group, noting the determination etched on their faces.

Everyone nodded in unison, drawing deep breaths and tightening their grip on their weapons. Positioned at the center were the Patriarch, Mr. and Mrs. Winters, and those tasked with carrying the stretchers.

After a final check, Tristan drew a deep breath, steeling himself before twisting the doorknob of the emergency exit leading to the upper floors. The real problem now lay ahead: the zombies lurking in the emergency exit. With their ascent, the challenge doubled; if they engaged in combat, pushing forward would become even more difficult with the risk of additional zombies descending from above.

A stampede could crush them, and falling zombies posed yet another threat, among countless other possibilities.

The reason why they are thinking of this as an issue was because there were a few doors of the emergency exit from the upper floor that had been compromised and were now wide open or jammed.

As the zombies descended, those at the vanguard would face the immense weight of the undead pressing against them, yet they would have to forge ahead. With no time to spare, Tristan acted swiftly, flinging the door open. As it swung wide, a group of zombies standing in the fire exit fixed their hungry gaze upon them, then lunged forward like ravenous wolves.

Tristan and the others at the vanguard wasted no time deliberating; they let their actions speak for them. During their earlier meeting, Vulture had emphasized that the crystal core must have formed by now. If feasible, they should extract it from the zombies' heads, as it was as valuable as water and food.

With the emergency exit still relatively clear, Tristan took the lead, guiding the group swiftly. As he moved, his other hand deftly and precisely extracted the crystal cores from the zombies he killed. He aimed for maximum efficiency, unwilling to linger any longer than necessary, ensuring he didn't miss a beat in collecting the cores.

The others followed suit, though not as efficiently as Tristan, their pace was still brisk. However, in the confined space of the emergency exit with minimal ventilation, the overpowering stench of rotting corpses became unbearable, even for Tristan. They all felt nauseated, their stomachs churning at the thought that their last meal might soon be expelled from their bodies.

Even individuals like Tristan, who had witnessed all manner of gore and disgusting sights, couldn't help but gag occasionally as the putrid stench assaulted his nostrils with each impaled zombie. The guttural growls and roars of the defeated zombies reverberated in the confined space, echoing ominously and drawing more undead towards them.

Despite the overwhelming circumstances, they had no choice but to press onward and ascend.

Despite only reaching the third-floor exit, they had already killed more than two dozen zombies. Their progress was hindered by the inability to move the bodies of the undead they had just slain, causing the corpses to pile up on the floor. This clutter occasionally causes someone to lose their balance or stumble, posing a significant danger.

If such an accident were to occur during combat with zombies, a fatal bite would likely ensue sooner or later.

Tristan and the others had anticipated this issue, but they hadn't yet found a more effective solution. So, after killing a zombie and extracting its crystal core, they made sure to shove the corpse down the flight of stairs. This tactic aimed to create a makeshift barrier.

If zombies came running from the compromised or open emergency exit doors on the floors below, the dead bodies would slow their advance, buying the team some precious time to regroup or catch their breath.

As the vanguard began to tire from leading the group, they rotated positions with those at the rear to catch their breath and offer support when necessary. By the time they reached the fifth floor, a surge of over three to four dozen zombies poured out from the open double doors. It seemed there had been some kind of gathering on that floor, resulting in a horde of young people turned into zombies.

Tristan had barely returned to the vanguard when the zombies surged towards them, catching them in the midst of their ascent and putting them at a clear disadvantage. With no flat ground to confront the zombies, none of them faltered. Instead of resorting to their usual tactics, one of the vanguard members began shoving the zombies sideways, pushing them off to the railing to the flight of stairs.

So, even if the zombies didn't die from the impact when they hit the ground or the railings of the lower floor, the force would still be enough to shatter their limbs or spines, rendering them immobile. The only problem was, that this method was energy-consuming and not as swift as simply stabbing the zombies, especially with more of them approaching.

Vulture took the lead and conjured a wall-like barrier to push the zombies back towards the door, while the others tossed the remaining zombies that didn't get caught in the earth wall to the side of the railings, similar to what the first man did.

Their tacit understanding and clear grasp of their roles were pivotal in their progress. With a coordinated effort, they applied more force to advance the earth wall step by step, sensing the weight of the zombies pressing against it. Each member of the vanguard exerted themselves to the fullest to maintain the push.

"Ugh!"

"One step at a time!" Tristan called out, establishing the rhythm for the push. "Don't exhaust yourselves. If you feel you've used up more than half your energy, rotate with those at the rear and take a break!" Between breaths, he continued to exert force against the earth wall, veins bulging on his forehead, face reddening with effort.

Every four steps, the vanguard would swap positions with those at the rear. Once both groups felt exhaustion creeping in, they maintained their positions to catch their breath. Maintaining their position became more manageable than pushing forward, especially with the zombies frantically rushing toward them, causing the earth wall to shake violently.

Vulture continuously reinforced the earth wall due to the relentless attacks it received from the zombies. As a result, he couldn't join the rotation to push the earth wall, as it required his full attention to maintain its stability and the protection it provides.

The clamor from the emergency exit drew the attention of the zombies from the floor below, intensifying the pounding on the door. This development unsettled their group because being trapped in the middle of their ascent would pose a serious problem, especially since most of them were exhausted.

Their worried gazes turned instinctively to Duke, who remained unconscious on the stretchers, his furrowed brow indicating his troubled state.

Kisha remained in a similar state to Duke, showing no signs of stirring even once beneath his embrace. Her face retained a serene composure, seemingly unaffected by the chaos unfolding outside. Mrs. Winters, too, appeared to be affected by the mounting stress in the air, her demeanor filled with a sense of dread.